What They Said about Muhammad

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During the centuries of the Crusades, all sorts of slanders were invented against the Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him. With the birth of the modern age, however, marked with religious tolerance and freedom of thought, there has been a great change in the approach of Western authors in their delineation of his life and character. The views of some non-Muslim scholars regarding Prophet Muhammad, given at the end, justify this opinion.

The West has still to go a step forward to discover the greatest reality about Muhammad, and that is his being the true and last Prophet of God for all of humanity. In spite of all its objectivity and enlightenment here has been no sincere and

objective attempt by the West to understand the Prophethood of Muhammad. It is so strange that very glowing tributes are paid to him for his integrity and achievement, but his claim of being the Prophet of God has been rejected explicitly and implicitly. It is here that a searching of the heart is required, and a review if the so-called objectivity is needed. The following glaring facts from the life of Muhammad have been furnished to facilitate an unbiased, logical and objective decision regarding his Prophethood.

Up to the age of forty, Muhammad was not known as a statesman, a preacher or an orator. He was never seen discussing the principles of metaphysics, ethics, law, politics, economics or sociology. No doubt he possessed an excellent character, charming manners and was highly cultured. Yet there was nothing so deeply striking and so radically extraordinary in him that would make men expect something great and revolutionary from him in the future. But when he came out from the Cave of Hira with a new message, he was completely transformed. Is it possible for such a person of the above qualities to turn all of a sudden into 'an imposter' and claim to be the Prophet of God and thus invite the rage of his people? One might ask, for what reason did he suffer all the hardships imposed on him? His people offered to accept him as their king and to lay all the riches of the land at his feet if only he would leave the preaching of his religion. But he chose to refuse their tempting offers and go on preaching his religion single-handedly in the face of all kinds of insults, social boycott and even physical assault by

his own people. Was it not only God's support and his firm will to disseminate the message of God and his deep-rooted belief that ultimately Islam would emerge as the only way of life for humanity, that he stood like a mountain in the face of all opposition and conspiracies to eliminate him? Furthermore, had he come with a design of rivalry with the Christians and the Jews, why should he have made belief in Jesus and Moses and other Prophets of God, may God praise them all, a basic requirement of faith without which no one could be a Muslim?

Is it not an incontrovertible proof of his Prophethood that in spite of being unlettered and having led a very normal and quiet life for forty years, when he began preaching his message, all of Arabia stood in awe and wonder at his wonderful eloquence and oratory? It was so matchless that the whole legion of Arab poets, preachers and orators of the highest caliber failed to bring forth its equivalent. And above all, how could he then pronounce truths of a scientific nature contained in the Quran that no human being could possibly have developed at that time?

Last but not least, why did he lead a hard life, even after gaining power and authority? Just ponder over the words he uttered while dying:

"We, the community of the Prophets, are not inherited. Whatever we leave behind is for charity."

As a matter of fact, Muhammad is the last link of the chain of Prophets sent in different lands and times since the beginning of human life on this planet. The following are writings of some western authors regarding Muhammad.

Lamartine, Histoire de la Turquie, Paris 1854, Vol II, pp. 276-77:

“If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad? The most famous men created arms, laws and empires only. They founded, if anything at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away before their eyes. This man moved not only armies, legislations, empires, peoples and dynasties, but millions of men in one-third of the then inhabited world; and more than that, he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and souls… the forbearance in victory, his ambition, which was entirely devoted to one idea and in no manner striving for an empire; his endless prayers, his mystic conversations with God, his death and his triumph after death; all these attest not to an imposture but to a firm conviction which gave him the power to restore a dogma. This dogma was twofold, the unit of God and the immateriality of God; the former telling what God is, the latter telling what God is not; the one overthrowing false gods with the sword, the other starting an idea with words.

“Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?”

Edward Gibbon and Simon Ocklay, History of the Saracen Empire, London, 1870, p. 54:

"It is not the propagation but the permanency of his religion that deserves our wonder, the same pure and perfect impression which he engraved at Mecca and Medina is preserved, after the revolutions of twelve centuries by the Indian, the African and the Turkish proselytes of the Quran...The Mahometans[1] have uniformly withstood the temptation of reducing the object of their faith and devotion to a level with the senses and imagination of man. 'I believe in One God and Mahomet the Apostle of God', is the simple and invariable profession of Islam. The intellectual image of the Deity has never been degraded by any visible idol; the honors of the prophet have never transgressed the measure of human virtue, and his living precepts have restrained the gratitude of his disciples within the bounds of reason and religion."

Bosworth Smith, Mohammed and Mohammadanism, London 1874, p. 92:

"He was Caesar and Pope in one; but he was Pope without Pope's pretensions, Caesar without the legions of Caesar: without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a palace, without a fixed revenue; if ever any man had the right to say that he ruled by the right divine, it was Mohammed, for he had all the power without its instruments and without its supports."

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1 The term Mahometans and Mohammadanism is a misnomer introduced by orientalists certain due to their lack of understanding of Islam, in analogy to Christ and Christianity.

Annie Besant, The Life and Teachings of Muhammad, Madras 1932, p. 4:

"It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great Prophet of Arabia, who knows how he taught and how he lived, to feel anything but reverence for that mighty Prophet, one of the great messengers of the Supreme. And although in what I put to you I shall say many things which may be familiar to many, yet I myself feel whenever I re-read them, a new way of admiration, a new sense of reverence for that mighty Arabian teacher."

W. Montgomery, Mohammad at Mecca, Oxford 1953, p. 52:

"His readiness to undergo persecutions for his beliefs, the high moral character of the men who believed in him and looked up to him as leader, and the greatness of his ultimate achievement – all argue his fundamental integrity. To suppose Muhammad an impostor raises more problems than it solves. Moreover, none of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad."

James A. Michener, 'Islam: The Misunderstood Religion' in Reader's Digest (American Edition), May 1955, pp. 68-70:

"Muhammad, the inspired man who founded Islam, was born about A.D. 570 into an Arabian tribe that worshipped idols. Orphaned at birth, he was always particularly solicitous of the poor and needy, the widow and the orphan, the slave and the downtrodden. At twenty he was already a

successful businessman, and soon became director of camel caravans for a wealthy widow. When he reached twenty-five, his employer, recognizing his merit, proposed marriage. Even though she was fifteen years older, he married her, and as long as she lived, remained a devoted husband.

"Like almost every major prophet before him, Muhammad fought shy of serving as the transmitter of God's word, sensing his own inadequacy. But the angel commanded 'Read'. So far as we know, Muhammad was unable to read or write, but he began to dictate those inspired words which would soon revolutionize a large segment of the earth: "There is one God."

"In all things Muhammad was profoundly practical. When his beloved son Ibrahim died, an eclipse occurred, and rumors of God's personal condolence quickly arose. Whereupon Muhammad is said to have announced, 'An eclipse is a phenomenon of nature. It is foolish to attribute such things to the death or birth of a human-being.'

"At Muhammad's own death an attempt was made to deify him, but the man who was to become his administrative successor killed the hysteria with one of the noblest speeches in religious history: 'If there are any among you who worshipped Muhammad, he is dead. But if it is God you worshipped, He lives forever.'"

Michael H. Hart, The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History, New York: Hart Publishing Company, Inc. 1978, p. 33:

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cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?"

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"My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular level."

Encyclopedia Britannica:

"....a mass of detail in the early sources show that he was an honest and upright man who had gained the respect and loyalty of others who were like-wise honest and upright men." (Vol. 12)

George Bernard Shaw said about him:

"He must be called the Saviour of Humanity. I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it much needed peace and happiness."

(The Genuine Islam, Singapore, Vol. 1, No. 8, 1936)

He was by far the most remarkable man that ever set foot on this earth. He preached a religion, founded a state, built a nation, laid down a moral code, initiated numerous social and political reforms, established a powerful and dynamic society to practice and represent his teachings and

completely revolutionized the worlds of human thought and behavior for all times to come.

His Name is Muhammad. He was born in Arabia in the year 570 C.E., started his mission of preaching the religion of Truth, Islam (submission to One God) at the age of forty and departed from this world at the age of sixty-three. During this short period of twenty three years of his Prophethood, he changed the complete Arabian peninsula from paganism and idolatry to worship of One God, from tribal quarrels and wars to national solidarity and cohesion, from drunkenness and debauchery to sobriety and piety, from lawlessness and anarchy to disciplined living, from utter bankruptcy to the highest standards of moral excellence. Human history has never known such a complete transformation of a people or a place before or since - and imagine all these unbelievable wonders in just over two decades.

LaMartine, the renowned historian speaking on the essentials of human greatness wonders:

“If greatness of purpose, smallness of means and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad? The most famous men created arms, laws and empires only. They founded, if anything at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away before their eyes. This man moved not only armies, legislation, empires, peoples and dynasties, but millions of men in one-third of the then inhabited world; and more than that, he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and souls....his

forbearance in victory, his ambition, which was entirely devoted to one idea and in no manner striving for an empire; his endless prayers, his mystic conversations with God, his death and his triumph after death; all these attest not to an imposture but to a firm conviction which gave him the power to restore a dogma. This dogma was two-fold, the unity of God and the immateriality of God; the former telling what God is, the latter telling what God is not; the one overthrowing false gods with the sword, the other starting an idea with the words."

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The world has had its share of great personalities. But these were one-sided figures who distinguished themselves in but one or two fields, such as religious thought or military leadership. The lives and teachings of these great personalities of the world are shrouded in the mist of time. There is so much speculation about the time and place of their birth, the mode and style of their life, the nature and detail of their teachings and the degree and measure of their success or failure that it is impossible for humanity to reconstruct accurately the lives and teachings of these men.

Not so this man. Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, accomplished so much in such diverse fields of human thought and behavior in the fullest blaze of human history. Every detail of his private life and public utterances has been accurately documented and faithfully preserved to our day. The authenticity of the record so preserved are vouched for not only by the faithful followers but even by his prejudiced critics.

Muhammad was a religious teacher, a social reformer, a moral guide, an administrative colossus, a faithful friend, a wonderful companion, a devoted husband, a loving father - all in one. No other man in history ever excelled or equaled him in any of these different aspects of life - but it was only for the selfless personality of Muhammad to achieve such incredible perfections.

Mahatma Gandhi, speaking on the character of Muhammad, says in (Young India):

"I wanted to know the best of one who holds today's undisputed sway over the hearts of millions of mankind....I became more than convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the Prophet, the scrupulous regard for his pledges, his intense devotion to this friends and followers, his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and in his own mission. These and not the sword carried everything before them and surmounted every obstacle. When I closed the 2nd volume (of the Prophet's biography), I was sorry there was not more for me to read of the great life."

Thomas Carlyle in his (Heroes and Heroworship), was simply amazed as to:

“how one man single-handedly, could weld warring tribes and wandering Bedouins into a most powerful and civilized nation in less than two decades.”

Diwan Chand Sharma wrote:

“Muhammad was the soul of kindness, and his influence was felt and never forgotten by those around him.”

(D.C. Sharma, The Prophet of the East, Calcutta, 1935, pp. 12)

Edward Gibbon and Simon Ockley speaking on the profession of Islam write:

“I believe in One God, and Mahomet, an Apostle of God’is the simple and invariable profession of Islam. The intellectual image of the Deity has never been degraded by any visible idol; the honor of the Prophet has never transgressed the measure of human virtues; and his living precepts have restrained the gratitude of his disciples within the bounds of reason and religion.”

(History of the Saracan Empires, London, 1870, p. 54)

Muhammad was nothing more or less than a human being. But he was a man with a noble mission, which was to unite humanity on the worship of One and Only One God and to teach them the way to honest and upright living based on the commands of God. He always described himself as,

“A Servant and Messenger of God,” and so indeed every action of his proclaimed to be.

Speaking on the aspect of equality before God in Islam, the famous poetess of India, Sarojini Naidu says:

“It was the first religion that preached and practiced democracy; for, in the mosque, when the call for prayer is sounded and worshippers are gathered together, the democracy of Islam is embodied five times a day when the peasant and king kneel side by side and proclaim: ‘God Alone is Great’... I have been struck over and over again by this indivisible unity of Islam that makes man instinctively a brother.”

(S. Naidu, Ideals of Islam, vide Speeches & Writings, Madras, 1918, p. 169)

In the words of Prof. Hurgronje:

“The league of nations founded by the prophet of Islam put the principle of international unity and human brotherhood on such universal foundations as to show candle to other nations.” He continues: “The fact is that no nation of the world can show a parallel to what Islam has done towards the realization of the idea of the League of Nations.”

The world has not hesitated to raise to divinity, individuals whose lives and missions have been lost in legend. Historically speaking, none of these legends achieved even a fraction of what Muhammad accomplished. And all his striving was for the sole purpose of uniting mankind for the worship of One God on the codes of moral excellence. Muhammad or his followers never at

any time claimed that he was a Son of God or the God-incarnate or a man with divinity - but he always was and is even today considered as only a Messenger chosen by God.

Michael H. Hart in his recently published book on ratings of men who contributed towards the benefit and upliftment of mankind writes:

“My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world’s most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels.”

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K. S. Ramakrishna Rao, an Indian Professor of Philosophy in his booklet, (“Muhammad, The Prophet of Islam,”) calls him the

“Perfect model for human life.”

Prof. Ramakrishna Rao explains his point by saying:

“The personality of Muhammad, it is most difficult to get into the whole truth of it. Only a glimpse of it I can catch. What a dramatic succession of picturesque scenes! There is Muhammad, the Prophet. There is Muhammad, the Warrior; Muhammad, the Businessman; Muhammad, the Statesman; Muhammad, the Orator; Muhammad, the Reformer; Muhammad, the Refuge of Orphans; Muhammad, the Protector of Slaves; Muhammad, the Emancipator of Women;

Muhammad, the Judge; Muhammad, the Saint. All in all these magnificent roles, in all these departments of human activities, he is alike a hero."

Today after a lapse of fourteen centuries, the life and teachings of Muhammad have survived without the slightest loss, alteration or interpolation. They offer the same undying hope for treating mankind's many ills, which they did when he was alive. This is not a claim of Muhammad's followers but also the inescapable conclusion forced upon by a critical and unbiased history.

The least you could do as a thinking and concerned human being is to stop for a moment and ask yourself: Could these statements sounding so extraordinary and revolutionary be really true? And supposing they really are true and you did not know this man Muhammad or hear about him, isn't it time you responded to this tremendous challenge and put in some effort to know him?

It will cost you nothing but it may prove to be the beginning of a completely new era in your life.